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ABSTRACT

To determine the general characteristics of beginning reading materials, to establish categories in regard to concepts and the instruction of concepts, and to search for a common framework among concepts, a study surveyed six popular, widely promoted basal series which had been copyrighted within the past 5 years. For each lesson, the stated objectives, method of presentation, language to be used by the teacher, opportunities to confirm the students' acquisition of the concepts presented and the extension activities were examined. In the first survey over 50 separate objectives were identified, indicating the diverse assortment and varied sequencing within the programs. The second examination identified six categories that encompassed all the objectives: general concepts, decoding (letters and words), language development, comprehension of written discourse, directionality of print, and concepts about written language. Findings show that some programs contained very little written language and the language that was included did not seem intended to communicate messages. Series did not include informal assessments to determine the child's knowledge of word, letter, sentence, and sound concepts. The cognitive limitations of young children also did not seem to be considered, since some of the materials began with the most abstract and ambiguous units of language--graphophonic relationships. An assumption that seemed implicit in the programs is that all children need the same rigid sequence of skills, but over all, findings suggest that the authors did not agree upon the objectives and concepts necessary to teach these skills. (HOD)

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THE BASAL: What Does it Demand of the Beginning Reader?

A Paper Presented at the
National Reading Conference
Dallas, Texas
1981

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The use of basal reading programs, developed by numbers of educational publishing companies, is unquestionably the most common method of teaching reading in our schools. State, district and school committees spend long hours in the evaluation and selection of the best basal series to purchase for childrens' reading instruction. Even after careful choices are made, influential pressure groups can cause selections to be altered. (In Texas the 1981 Legislature added reading programs to the five programs which were selected in 1980, the adoption year.) The time and effort expended, the political pressure, and also the monies involved indicate the concern and the uncertainty regarding how best to provide reading instruction.

While one would not argue that the goal of reading instruction is comprehension, there is much controversary regarding how reading instruction should begin (Samuels, 1980). An overall look at the basal reading materials, k-6, indicates that there are many common features. For example, beautifully illustrated stories, expository selections and poetry are usually represented. But when one informally compares these materials at the beginning levels, the differences in the features and the philosophies of the programs begin to surface. It is obvious that in the beginning reading programs, there are wide variations in the concepts presented, the sequencing of these concepts and the methods of presentation.

The purpose of this study was to examine beginning reading materials to determine general characteristics, to establish categories in regard to concepts and the instruction of the concepts, and to search for a common framework. Such a study could be beneficial because it provides insights into the types of existing programs and to the types of skills developed.

Review of the Literature

Only a few studies were found which identified and categorized instructional procedures given in basal reading programs. The most recent is Durkin's significant work (1981) in which she examined reading comprehension instruction as presented in five basal reading series. In this study she determined the frequency of manual suggestions for six categories: instruction, review, application, practice, preparation and assessment. She found that the instructions to teach children to read concentrated on areas of assessment, practical application and review rather than instruction.

Beck and McCaslin (1978, 1979) reviewed beginning reading materials in two separate studies. They determined that the primary objective of beginning reading instruction is the acquisition of word attack skills and word recognition abilities. Thus their study was designed to investigate eight beginning reading series to determine "how instruction is arranged in the first two grades of elementary school to teach beginning readers to break the code." (p. 5). In the second study Beck and McCaslin studied instructional dimensions that may affect reading comprehension in two basal reading programs.

In an earlier research study (Chall, 1967) examined basal reading materials from the fifties and early sixties. As a result of the findings, Chall raised several questions regarding the lessons presented in the programs. The questions concerned the heavy reliance on "word methods"; the heavy attention to meaning, appreciation and application at the early levels; the constant and detailed guidance that the teacher is to provide the children; the excessive amount of detailed guidance provided the teacher resulting in extensive and expensive teacher's manuals; the limited amount of code emphasis; the limited number and repetition of words; the strict control of words; and the early stress on silent reading.

All of these studies were quite critical of the basal materials and made recommendations regarding their improvement. To study the materials, the researchers identified the features and scope of their study. For example, Chall hypothesized that at the beginning level a stronger code emphasis with less attention to meaning tended to produce better over-all reading achievement (p. 137). This point of view was influential in the Beck and McCaslin research and, thus, seemed to affect their decision to include only two of these in the review of reading comprehension instruction. Durkin based her research regarding comprehension instruction provided in basals following her earlier study (1978) in which she observed 11,587 minutes of reading instruction in the classroom. In both of these studies she defined comprehension instruction as something "that ought to help children acquire the ability to understand or work out the meaning of connected text" (p. 518). While current findings in comprehension and discourse analysis (Frederiksen 1978, Halliday, 1976) support such a view, it is probably true that the authors of the basal programs considered practice and application activities to be instruction as well.

The decisions regarding the dimensions of reading instruction that were investigated in the cited studies were not based on which reading methods are best because such knowledge is unavailable. Rather, the studies were based on the researcher's best intutitions. Since the current research was designed to determine the content of beginning reading materials provided with basal reading programs, it was necessary to make judgements and to establish definitions. Therefore, this study suffers from the same limitations as other investigators which lack concrete truths and in which arbitrary judgements must be made.

Procedure

Six popular basal series, which had copyright within the past five years and were widely promoted, were chosen. (See Appendix I) The materials and the accompanying teacher's manuals used for beginning reading instruction were studied. The reviewers independently examined each lesson regarding the objectives stated, the method of presentation, the language to be used by the teacher, opportunities within the lessons to confirm the student's acquisition of the concepts presented and the extension activities. In this first survey, over fifty separate objectives were identified indicating the diverse assortment and varied sequencing within the programs.

In a second examination, categories were established. Only objectives which could be behaviorally observed were identified. As a result of this requirement, some of the objectives in the manuals were impossible to classify as they were stated because they were too broad in scope. For example, auditory discrimination was stated many times as an objective, but when the lessons were examined, the obvious objective as indicated by the teacher's and child's instructions, were such behaviors as labeling sounds in the environment, identifying soft and loud noises, matching beginning sounds in stated words, etc. Another problem in categorizing the objectives is revealed in the following example. The five objectives stated for one lesson were "visual discrimination, visual memory, eye-hand coordination, left-to-right progression and recognizing small and capital lettors," whereas the activity in the pupil's book required that the child draw a line from eighteen capitol letters to the corresponding small letters. No specific instructions matching the objectives were included. The reviewers worked independently to establish categories and to group objectives under each category. The few mismatches, then, were discussed and resolved with no dis-

agreement. Since the extention and supplementary activities were adjuncts to the lessons and not part of the author's instructional sequence, these were not included in the analysis.

As decisions were made regarding the objectives in each lesson, the individual lesson number was listed in the appropriate categories. For the final tables, frequencies were determined. For example, 58 lessons relating a sound to its symbol occurred in one series, while there were 45 lessons of this type in another. Sometimes it was necessary to place the lesson number under more than one category, i.e. when the activity included learning a letter name and also its sound, it was coded under alphabet identification and under initial graphophonic relationships.

The reviewers identified six general categories which encompassed all objectives. The categories are defined below:

1. General Concepts included lessons which focused on general knowledge: labeling, classifying and learning new concepts, i.e. geometric shapes.

2. Decoding: Letters and Words included lessons in alphabet identification, graphophonic (sound-symbol) relationships, rhyming words, and introduction of words.

3. Language Development included lessons structured to extend oral langauge abilities beyond one or two word responses. Consideration was given to topics which encouraged children to think and talk about concepts and expperiences.

4. Comprehension of Written Discourse included lessons, oral or written, directed toward comprehending a written text such as written poems and stories, langauge experience charts, etc.

5. Directionality of Print included lessons to develop reading behaviors such as left-to-right, return sweep and down the page and book handling.

6. Concepts about Written Language (excluding directionality) included concepts of word, letter, sentence, and punctuation.

As indicated by this list, categories have been added to the traditional reading instructional categories of word recognition and

comprehension. These categories have been found to have a positive relationship with beginning reading success. (Downing 1970, 1980, Downing and Oliver 1974, Reid, 1966, Johns, 1980, Ehri, 1979, Evans, Taylor, Blum, 1979). Researchers have shown that concepts used in reading instruction are often unfamiliar to young children. The concepts included terms such as "word" and "letter", the functional nature of written language and directionality of print. Olsen (1977a, 1977b), Smith, (1978), Frederiksen (1975), Menyuk (in press), and others have suggested that comprehending written discourse is different from comprehending oral langauge and places different demands on the comprehender. Influenced by the importance of these findings, the categories Directionality of Print, Concepts about Written Language, and the Comprehension of Written Discourse were included in this investigation.

Results of the Study

Examination of the beginning reading materials of the six basal programs revealed that these materials might be considered more diverse than alike. The first and most obvious difference, is that three programs, Series 2, 3, and 4, presented the steps in beginning reading in a single text, with 117, 112, and 78 lessons respectively; two programs Series 1 and 5, used two texts with a total of 182 and 155 lessons; and one program, Series 6, used three texts with 172 lessons. The likenesses and the differences in the programs are revealed as each of the categories is discussed in turn.

General Concepts

(Place Table 1 about here)

The objectives in the General Concepts category focused on general knowledge and classification of this knowledge. Four of the series had over 32 objectives in this category while the other two programs had six

and zero. The diverse choice of items represented a wide assortment of concepts ranging from common terms such as color names to less common terms such as texture words (rough, smooth). As indicated by the totals in Table 1, the concepts of "same", "not the same" and "different" were the most common, followed by concepts about relationships in space, "top, bottom, over, under," and concepts of color.

Although it can not be observed in Table 1 many of the concepts that were presented were unique to a single program. For example, concepts such as body parts and baby animal names were included only in Series 1 while eight lessons focusing on number concepts were included only in Series 4.

Five series included classification objectives. The activities were categorizing tools, fruits, modes of transportation, occupations, furniture for particular rooms, etc.

In summary, it seems that the authors of four programs consider general concepts critical to beginning reading. However, they do not agree on the choice of concepts. Furthermore, the total number of 41 classification activities indicates that this ability is valued but the choice of the items to classify are different. The manual directions failed to relate labeling and classification abilities to reading instruction.

Decoding: Letters and Words

(Place Table 2 about here)

The choice of activities in the category, Decoding: Letters and Words, which one might expect to be alike, also showed extreme differences. As indicated in Table 2, only two of the objectives were included in all six series: letter identification and matching small letters to corresponding capital letters. Letter identification of both capital and small letters

was presented in one lesson, in Series 1. Then the graphophonic relationships were taught over the next 80 lessons. In Series 2 and 3 letter identification was presented within a sequence of lessons. The sequence began by matching sounds of pictures of spoken words, no letters or words are shown. Then instruction in the letter name (letter identidication), matching it with its sound, was taught. Finally, the graphophonic relationships were practiced by presenting words representing the initial sound. This practice sometimes caused letter identification to extend over 80 lessons. A feature of some lessons, unique in Series 3, demanded that the child differentiate beginning sounds in spoken context based on semantic cues as well as graphophonic cues.

In Series 4, 5 and 6, letter identification was presented first as a major objective in 10, 34, and 48 lessons respectively, and occurred independently rather than being part of the graphophnic objectives. In two of the programs, Series 5 and 6, one of the texts looked very much like a commercial alphabet book with labeled pictures representing the initial letter. Along with the development of letter identification, Series 6 included alphabetical order as a major objective in 40 lessons.

The differences in the number of graphophonic lessons in the series dealing with initial sounds varied from 58 lessons to as few as twelve and zero. One series had lessons in which pictures were matched according to final sounds without printed words. Only two of the series presented graphophonic lessons devoted to medial vowels, 22 and five lessons respectively, and ending sounds, two and five lessons. It is interesting to note that Series 4 had no lessons in these readiness materials focusing on graphophonic relationship objectives. In this program these objectives were presented in the preprimer.

The sequence of presenting letters was also different in all the programs, although this can not be seen in the table. For example, the sequence

of the first seven letters presented was not the same in any of the six programs.

Four of the programs included lessons directed toward the identification of words that rhyme. The objectives were concerned with the concept, "rhyming words". There was no suggestions for the teacher to link rhyming words to a decoding strategy.

In some of the materials it was observed that there were very few instances of written language and the language that was included seemed to serve particular purposes. This observation led to further investigation regarding the way in which words were presented in the lessons. Five questions were investiagated: 1) Were words used primarily as labels of pictures? 2) Were words used primarily as exemplars for presenting initial graphophonic relationships? 3) Were words used primarily as exemplars of middle or ending graphophonic relationships? 4) Were words used primarily in "matching" exercises such as matching the configuration of words? 5) Were words used primarily in units of communication (sentence or longer discourse)? The results of this investigation are presented in the final five rows of Table 2. In Series 5 and in Series 6, Book 2, words were used right from the beginning as labels in alphabet identification instruction and in messages. In Series 1 words were used primarily as examples of initial, medial and ending sounds, usually accompanied by representative pictures. This practice resulted in the introduction and decoding of words that are probably uncommon to young children such as "yak" and "ox". As indicated in Table 5, two of the series had a small number of lessons using written words, actually 18 percent and 23 percent of 117 and 112 lesson respectively.

Language Development

(Place Table 3 about here)

Language development is a general category often included in beginning reading programs. Only two of these series, Series 5 and 6, listed oral language development as a major objective. The importance of language development, however, seemed implicit in the other programs. The instructional procedures in each of the two programs will be discussed since these were major goals. In Series 5, the students' books presented 11 sets (three or more in a set) of pictures that suggested a story. The teacher was directed to have the children construct oral sentences about each picture in the series, tell a whole story indicating a sequence of events about the pictures, and finally, suggest a title. Also the children were to record the story on audio-tape so that the book or chart story could be made for them to read. Additional activities such as riddles and classification activities were included for discussion in this series.

In Series 6 there were 62 oral language development objectives stated. It was necessary, however to omit most of the lessons in the tabulations because the activities required only a one or two word response (labeling) or seemed unrelated to the child's interest and background. For example, one lesson required the children to tell how letter shapes are different, i.e. "call on individuals to describe particular figures (letters) giving the type of lines drawn, the size and the color. Encourage discussion by asking for comparisons between shapes." In another oral language lesson, the child was to read a sentence about a picture. It was impossible to determine why the author listed language development as the objective rather than the more obvious objective of reading. Only five of the lessons consisted of integrating a sequence of pictures into a story.

Comprehension of Written Discourse

(Place Table 4 about here)

Instruction directed to the comprehension of written texts, either read orally or as read-alongs, was examined. As Table 4 indicates, five of the programs had less than 10 lessons which included the comprehension of rhymes, poems, stories and language experience charts. On the other hand, one series included consistent involvement with written discourse. Comprehension activities, listening or read-alongs, were listed in four manuals. However, because they did not include comprehension of a written text to be read by the teacher, these activities were not counted in Table 4. The reason for this decision and the problems involved are illustrated in the following example. Series 4 presented 6 lessons with listening comprehension as the objective. In these lessons children were to choose a picture that would complete a sentence read by the teacher, i.e. "Some of the animals the children saw at the zoo were _____." Animals were pictured in the corresponding illustration. This activity seemed to fit under the general concepts category of labeling rather than comprehension of written discourse. In Series 2 listening comprehension stories were presented in 16 lessons. A close examination indicated that the first two stories were familiar children's classics that the teacher was to tell. The remaining stories, while they were written in the manual for the teacher to read aloud, had little story plot and seemed to be designed to develop letter-sound relationships rather than comprehension. In these lessons the children were to hold up the appropriate letter-card whenever they heard a word having the appropriate initial sound, i.e. "Jiffy jumped to a jar. Jiffy jumped to a jeep. Then Jiffy the Jaguar jumped to a jack-o-lantern ..."

Since these seemed to be designed for decoding activities rather than comprehension and since it is unlikely that young children could listen to comprehend and at the same time listen to differentiate sounds, these lessons were not counted in this category.

Only one of the programs presented comprehension of written texts as a major goal. This series included selections which were printed in the child's text as readalongs. In this case the children not only had the opportunity to hear the teacher read the selection, but also to see the selection in print. This series also included language experience charts as part of 11 lessons. (These were the culminating activities for the oral language objectives discussed above.)

The use of language experience charts as an instructional activity was discussed in several of the introductory sections of the teacher's manuals. Even though these were discussed, they were integrated into instructional activities in only a few instances.

In summary, there were very few opportunities for the children to interact with written texts in most of the programs.

Directionality of Print

(Place Table 5 about here)

Frequencies in the category, Directionality of Print, were determined by locating the number of times the authors presented directional behavior, i.e. left-to-right, back to left and down the page of print. (See Table 5) Series 1, 3 and 5 had no objectives or teacher directions in the lessons for this behavior while the directions in Series 3 and 4 consisted of many instances of such statements as "sweep hand along the line of print" or "point to pictures in left-to-right order." Many of the programs stated left-to-right

behavior as objectives but the instructional activities did not involve written langauge. Tasks such as looking at pictures or drawing lines from a picture or letter on the left to a corresponding one on the right were excluded from the computation, i.e. in one series the child was to draw a straight line, left to right, under a picture.

Since the programs addressed the objective of directional behavior but did not present lessons using actual printed text, the materials were reviewed again to determine if the activities required that the children be involved with directional behavior even though the lessons did not state this as an objective. In Series 1, 2, 3, and 5 the child was required to trace over dotted letters and in one of these, arrows accompanied the task indicating the direction the child was to follow. On the other hand, in some of the materials, rebus sentences which required left-right behavior were presented. For example, in one sentence Mr. Moose's picture occupied the subject slot of a rebus sentence, and to make sense of the sentence, the child had to engage in left to right reading behavior.

At no time did the teacher's directions in any of the manuals suggest that the children should be encouraged to point to words or letters so that the teacher might be able to evaluate their knowledge about directionality.

Concepts About Written Langauge (Excluding directionality)

(Place Table 6 about here)

The programs were examined for objectives concerning concepts such as "word", "letter", "sentence", etc., which researchers have determined to be critical to beginning reading. Only Series 1 had a single lesson devoted to objectives concerning the concepts "word" and "letter." Two of these objectives were "awareness of the fact that English words have a written

as well as a spoken form" and "awareness of the relationship of letters to words and words to sentences." The lesson directed the teacher to point out an alphabet chart in the text picture and say "If you look at the chalk board in the pictures you will see a sentence. . . A sentence is a group of words that are put together to express an idea." There were no strategies included in the lesson to evaluate the children's comprehension, and in subsequent lessons these terms were used without further concern. In Series 3 the author suggested that it was important for the child to understand the relationship between letter and sound that the teacher should not continue with the lessons until these concepts are developed. However, the teacher was not provided with a sequence of alternative plans for instruction. Punctuation instruction in the functions of the period, comma, question mark and capital letters also was included in three of the series.

In all of the programs the terms "words", "letter", and "sound" and sometimes "sentence" were used without prior determination regarding what the children could conceptualize. Only in Series 5 was there a strategy to assure that the children were attending to the features of language being discussed The manual suggested that teachers use their hands to "frame" the words, letters or points of reference instead of using the terms.

Summary of the Findings

This study was designed to determine "what's there" in beginning reading programs. A common framework was not identified since only a few features were found that were common to all six programs. Except for the superficial qualities of beautiful and colorful pictures in individual attractive workbook like texts and the fact that each text presented lessons in alphabet identification, overall commonalities were rare. To accomplish the task of categorizing the objectives, the lessons were analyzed and six general

categories were established. Findings in each category are summarized.

The general concepts category included lessons designed to present items of general knowledge and activities of classification. It was difficult to establish relationships between the objectives and the task of reading when the manual did not. The number of lessons devoted to development of general concepts varied from zero to 43. It might be assumed that four of the program authors viewed the development of concepts as critical to beginning reading instruction. However, when each specific concept was identified there seemed to be little commonality or predictability, and additionally, there was no attempt to tie these to the task of learning to read.

The examination of the Decoding: Letter and Word category in which many common elements were expected, also revealed that the programs were very different. The one common feature presented in all the series was the identification of letters of the alphabet. But again, diversity was obvious. In three series letter identification and graphophonic relationships were presented in the same series of lessons. This procedure caused the presentation of letter identification to extend over as many as 100 lessons.

In two series letter identification was presented first and prior to any graphophonic lessons. And in one program there were no graphophonic lessons using written langauge. These lessons were to be presented later in the preprimers rather than in the readiness materials. Medial and ending graphophonic relationships were presented in two of the programs.

Lessons in matching small letters and capital letters were common to all programs and lessons focused on alphabetical order were presented in two. While the concept of rhyming words was presented in four programs, this

knowledge was not suggested as a means to unlock new words.

Another contrasting observation was the way in which words were used. In two programs words were used right from the beginning to label pictures and as part of rebus sentences. Additionally, in one of these programs poems and stories in the form of read alongs were included. In these series words were presented as part of the development of graphophonic relationships objectives. This approach resulted in the use of uncommon words. In one of the series words were used in 19 lessons, however 13 of these lessons were designed for configuration matching rather than for communication or for examples of graphophonic relationships.

Language development was a major goal of two of the programs. However, only in one series was it found that the authors had developed specific, meaningful activities in which the child was to do more than respond in single words. In these lessons the child was to generate responses to a sequence of pictures to create stories. This series also presented classification activities and riddles with specific directions to stimulate language activities.

Comprehension of written discourse objectives were difficult to define and also to categorize. Many of the series focused on comprehension through pictures, stories told by the teacher, and comprehension of written passages which lack plot or structure. Only one series presented this objective as a significant goal.

While it was not clear from the manuals, the classification tasks mentioned under general concepts may have been intended to develop comprehension skills. In no place were these activities linked to reading or to reading comprehension.

All the materials addressed the feature of directionality of print. The manual directions varied including such directions as having the teacher to sweep her hand under letters, pictures or words from left to right; directing the child to connect items pictures on the left side of the page to items on the right; and having the child trace over letters. At no time was the teacher directed to check the children by having them point left to right as they encountered words and sentences. Most of the rebus sentences demanded left to right reading behavior when they were used. There were many exercises which stated directional behavior as a goal but very few instances in which the child was involved with real written language. On the basis of this review it seems that the authors of these beginning reading programs recognize the importance of directionality of print but fall short of assuring that it is acquired.

The materials were studied to investigate the instruction of concepts about written language such as word and letters. Five of the materials had no lessons devoted to the concepts, yet the terms were used from the very first lessons. Instruction about punctuation marks, which probably assumed the child could conceptualize a sentence, was presented in three of the programs. Only one series suggested a strategy to assure that the child was attending to the point of reference with instruction to the teacher to "frame" the word or sentence. Another series mentioned the need for teaching the terms in one lesson. However, the single lesson did not include follow up activities in which the teacher might observe the children's understanding. Since there was practically no attention given to the development of the concepts and since these terms were to be used by the teacher, it is apparent that the authors must assume that the children already possess this knowledge.

Overall, it appears that the authors of the six beginning reading programs reviewed for this study do not agree upon the skills and concepts necessary to be successful in beginning reading. While the materials were designed for a similar audience, the vast differences were surprising. One could hypothesize that another set of six basal programs would yield additional differences, and that a greater variation would surface.

Discussion

According to current research, children are competent langauge users when they come to school. They have acquired the significant phonological features and the basic syntactic system of their language (Menuyk, 1971 Chomsky 1972). They have the ability to demand, assert, question, persuade, plead, etc. (Wood 1976, Menyuk 1980) and the ability to predict messages and events (Smith 1978, Clay 1972, Goodman 1967). Additionally, children use written language functionally, understanding that certain sings and labels communicate messages (Reid 1966, Harste and Burke 1980, Holdaway 1979, Goodman 1976). Furthermore, very young children have acquired a structure for stories; their stories contain important story elements such as setting, characters, problems and events (Stein and Glenn 1979, Applebee 1978). Conversely, research indicates that young children lack the ability to reason, to deal with abstractions and to make generalizations which can be applied to other situations (Piaget 1952, Elkind 1970, Vygotsky 1978, Donaldson 1978).

It appears that, in general, the authors of beginning reading programs fail to capitolize on these characterics of children. For example, some programs contained very little written langauge and the langauge that was included did not seem intended to communicate messages. The series did not include informal assessments to determine the child's knowledge of concepts such as word, letter, sentence, sound, beginning sound, etc. which are

necessary to talk about reading. The cognitive limitations of young children also do not seem to be considered in the programs. Some of the materials begin with the most abstract and ambiguous units of language, graphophonic relationships. It appears also that in some programs authors assume that developing concepts, labeling, categorizing, classifying and rhyming will generalize to tasks of reading.

To date there is little research indicating how reading is acquired. Since it has been demonstrated that children do not know concepts used in reading instruction such as letter and word, it is probably foolish to assume that all children can understand many of the directions given in the reviewed manuals. "Word consciousness" may not be acquired prior to reading, but through interaction with print (Ehri 1979). The only longitudional study observing children as they learned to read was Clay's New Zealand research (1972). From her findings regarding directional behavior and knowledge of print she states, "It is not self-evident to a child that left-to-right movement along a line through a book and across a word are related. And telling that they are will not be sufficient. It is only through working with print. . . that he slowly consolidates the total network of relationships." (p. 60)

Most of the authors of the programs appeared to view oral language development as an important factor for beginning reading success. However, there were only a few activities included which seemed to be directed to this goal. Additionally, there was only one program which seemed to recognize the importance of children's interaction with written discourse, an area that is critical to school success according to Olsen (1977) and Smith (1978).

The methods of presenting graphophonic relationships in these readiness materials seemed to suggest four theoretical positions. One theory suggested that the child should identify or match sounds orally first, then learn the letter name, then match the sound with a letter in the initial position of a word. This procedure causes the introduction of letter names to be a lengthy process extending over many lessons. Another theory suggests that all the letters should be identified first, followed by graphophonic relationships presented in the initial position of words. A third theory is identical to the second, except that the words are presented in a sentence, i.e. Ricky Racoon rode on the roof (accompanied by an appropriate picture). A fourth theory suggests that after the children learn some letters concurrently with corresponding sounds, they are expected to induce the others. It seems that the third theory attempts to capitolize on the knowledge and linguistic competence that the child brings to the task. Clay explains how children use this knowledge, "To be successful children must use self correction. This involves the courage to make mistakes, the ear to recognize that an error has occurred and the patience to search for cues." (1972, p. 119).

An assumption which seems implicit in the programs is that all children need the same rigid sequence of skills. There were not assessments or observation checklists to determine the child's competencies and needs. Certainly, one would expect children who come to school with a rich background of experiences and interaction with stories and books would not need the same sequence and/or program as the children who do not have them. There were extensions and reinforcement activities suggested in the series, but these were included as maintenance for the established sequence rather than alternative routes.

Since "function of written language" was not included as an objective in any of the materials and since it overlapped many of the categories (labeling pictures and in reading language experience stories) this topic was not identified as a category to be investigated. However, if children did not come to school with the idea that books and other forms of written langauge were functional and intended to communicate messages, they probably would not learn this concept through the use of most of these materials. There were only a few lessons at the end of most of the texts devoted to print that might be meaningful. Only one series provided written messages right from the first. In general, it seems that if the children acquired the notion that print is communication while at school, they developed it because a thoughtful teacher made printed messages important.

This survey indicated that there were extreme differences in the specific objectives of the six programs that have been developed for beginning reading while their overall objectives, or goals, were the same, teaching young children to read. In general, the authors of the materials do not seem to recognize the cognitive limitations of young children and at the same time fail to respect competencies children bring to the task. There is a great need for improved programs, and these programs need to be based on a strong, clear-cut theory of beginning reading.

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APPENDIX

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Houghton-Mifflin Reading Program, Houghton-Mifflin Company, Boston, Mass., 1981, (Series 3).

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Reading Basics Plus, Harper and Row, Publishers, New York, 1976, (Series 6).

Reading 720, Rainbow Edition, Ginn and Company, Lexington, Mass., 1979, (Series 2).

TOTAL NUMBER OF LESSONS DEALING WITH GENERAL CONCEPTS
IN SIX BEGINNING READING PROGRAMS

	Series 1		Series 2	Series 3	Series 4	Series 5		Series 6			
	Bk 1	Bk 2				Bk 1	Bk 2	Bk 1	Bk 2	Bk 3	
Concepts of size	2		2		2			2	1	1	
Concepts of space	2		4		8			4			
Concepts of same-different	5		2		13			9			
Concepts of left and right (no print)	2	1	2		2			4			
Concepts such as first, last, beginning, end, middle	2		2		3						
Concepts of shapes			4		3			1			
Concepts of color	1		10		3	1	1	4	5		
Concepts of number					8						
Labeling such as sounds in the environment	9		2		1						
Classification according to color, size, shape	7	1	2				2	3			
Classification according to function	5		2		3	5	2	5	3	2	
TOTALS	35		32	0	46	11		44			

NUMBER OF LESSONS DEALING WITH DECODING LETTERS AND WORDS IN SIX BEGINNING READING PROGRAMS

	Series 1 Bk 1	Series 1 Bk 2	Series 2	Series 3	Series 4	Series 5 Bk 1	Series 5 Bk 2	Series 6 Bk 1	Series 6 Bk 2	Series 6 Bk 3	
Alphabet Identification		1	(11)	(56)	10	34			48		
Beginning Sounds (no letters)		1	20	21	4						
Ending Sounds (no letters)					4						
Graphophonic relationships initial letters		58	32	56			45			12	
Graphophonic relationships medial vowels		22	5								
Graphophonic relationships ending sounds		10	5								
Alphabetical order					4				(40)		
Matching capital letters and small letters	1	6	5	7	8	18			42		
Rhyming words	2	2	1		4			3	2	5	
Words used as labels		5	2	1	6	24	25		39	13	
Words used for initial graphophonic relationships		29		18							
Words used for middle and final graphophonic relationships		30	4								
Words used for matching configurations		1			13						
Words in communication units (sentences or longer discourse)		13	6	9		13	18			21	

( ) indicates the lesson is counted again in another category

TABLE 3

TOTAL NUMBER OF LESSONS DEALING WITH LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT IN SIX BEGINNING READING PROGRAMS

	Series 1		Series 2	Series 3	Series 4	Series 5		Series 6			
	Bk 1	Bk 2				Bk 1	Bk 2	Bk 1	Bk 2	Bk 3	
Discussion	5	3				4	8				
Generating oral stories or rebus stories	6	5	1			11	3			5	
Construction of sentences	2	1		4		4	18			4	
TOTALS	22		1	4	0	48		4			

TABLE 4

TOTAL NUMBER OF LESSONS DEALING WITH COMPREHENSION OF WRITTEN DISCOURSE IN SIX BEGINNING READING PROGRAMS

	Series 1		Series 2	Series 3	Series 4	Series 5		Series 6			
	Bk 1	Bk 2				Bk 1	Bk 2	Bk 1	Bk 2	Bk 3	
Rhymes and poems	2	1	4			4	9	2	1		
Stories	4		2	8		2	4			2	
Language experience charts		1	3			4	7				
TOTAL	8		9	8	0	30		5			

TABLE 5

TOTAL NUMBER OF LESSONS DEALING WITH CONCEPTS OF DIRECTIONALITY OF WRITTEN LANGUAGE IN SIX BEGINNING READING PROGRAMS

	Series 1		Series 2	Series 3	Series 4	Series 5		Series 6			
	Bk 1	Bk 2				Bk 1	Bk 2	Bk 1	Bk 2	Bk 3	
Sweephand (or point) under words, letters, pictures			1	80	19		5	2		1	
Sweep hand (or point) under sentences				12		4					
Matching item on left to item on right					2			2	1	1	
Presenting picture in left to right order								3	11		
Tracing		5	1		4	26			9		
Rebus						(4)	18			4	
	5		2	92	25	57		34			

TABLE 6

TOTAL NUMBER OF LESSONS DEALING WITH CONCEPTS ABOUT WRITTEN LANGUAGE (EXCLUDING DIRECTIONALITY) IN SIX BEGINNING READING PROGRAMS

	Series 1		Series 2	Series 3	Series 4	Series 5		Series 6			
	Bk 1	Bk 2				Bk 1	Bk 2	Bk 1	Bk 2	Bk 3	
Word letter		1									
Sentence		1		1						2	
Punctuation (period, comma, capital letter)		5		2						14	
	7			3						16	